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Alphabet and Pronunciation

a	(long) as in f ather (short) when followed by two consonants, as in car t
ä (umlaut)	as in any
ai	as in ais le
au (diphthong)	as in mouse
äu (diphthong)	as in moist
b	as in br ead after a consonant, at the end of a syllable or word as in lip
c	(used only in foreign words) as in huts
ch	as in the Scottish loch
ck	as in neck
d	as in dr ive after a consonant, at the end of a syllable or word as in bent
e	(long) as in bay (short) as in belt
ei (diphthong)	as in my
eu (diphthong)	sounds like äü
f	as in fun
g	as in g ood after a consonant, at the end of a syllable or word as in dark
h	as in hold
i	(long) as in machin e (short) as in fit
j	as in y es
k	as in kilo
l	as in land
m	as in mil k
n	as in nigh t
o	(long) as in ton e (short) as in oft en
ö (umlaut)	as in fur
p	as in past
q	as in qu ick (q is always followed by u)
r	rolled as in Scots
s	as in z ero
sch	as in sh oe
st	as in wish to
ß (sharp s)	as in gas
t	as in te ll
u	(long) as in moon (short) as in foot
ü (umlaut)	as in music (use only second sound of vowel: mee u sic)
v	as in f ast
w	as in v ery
x	as in box
y	sounds like ü

z

at the end of a word it sounds like i
as in **any**
as in **nuts**

Nouns

Nouns label or name things, persons, places, concepts, etc.: **Mann** (man), **Birne** (pear), **Sehnsucht** (longing). In German, all nouns are capitalized. Nouns are spelled and used differently depending on the gender, number and case of the noun.

Gender

Each noun in the German language has one of three genders: masculine, feminine, or neuter. Masculine nouns use **der** as the definite article, feminine nouns use **die**, and neuter nouns use **das**. Biological and grammatical gender do not always correspond. Genders of abstract nouns can be either masculine, feminine, or neuter. It is best to learn nouns and articles together.

Nouns ending in **-er** can be masculine, feminine, or neuter:
der Gärtner (gardener), **die Mutter** (mother), **das Leder** (leather)

Most nouns ending in **-en, -el, -ling, or -s** are masculine:
der Boden (ground), **der Vogel** (bird), **der Feigling** (coward), **der Knirps** (little fellow)

All infinitives used as nouns are neuter:
kochen - das Kochen (cooking), **leben - das Leben** (living)

Most trees, flowers, and fruit are feminine:
die Föhre (pine tree), **die Rose** (rose), **die Pflaume** (plum)
except for: **der Ahorn** (maple), **der Apfel** (apple) and **der Pfirsich** (peach)

Nouns ending in **-age, -ei, -heit, -ie, -ik, -ion, -itis, -keit, -schaft, -tät, -ung, and -ur** are feminine:
die Garage (garage), **die Konditorei** (confectionery), **die Wahrheit** (truth), **die Parodie** (parody), **die Komik** (comic), **die Operation** (operation), **die Pleuritis** (pleurisy), **die Freundlichkeit** (friendliness), **die Freundschaft** (friendship), **die Originalität** (originality),
die Ehrung, (honor) , **die Natur** (nature)

Nouns ending in **-ett, -il, -ium, -ma, -ment, -nis, -tel, -tum, and -um** are neuter (most are of foreign origin):
das Duett (duet), **das Fossil** (fossil), **das Stadium** (stage), **das Klima** (climat), **das Ferment** (ferment), **das Geheimnis** (secret), **das Viertel** (quarter), **das Heiligtum** (sanctuary), **das Album** (album) except for: **der Irrtum** (error), **der Reichtum** (wealth), **die Kenntnis** (knowledge), **die Bekümmernis** (affliction), **die Finsternis** (darkness), **die Besorgnis** (concern)

Geographical names can be masculine, feminine, or neuter:
der Schwarzwald (Black Forest), **der Iran** (Iran), **die Schweiz** (Switzerland) **die Donau** (Danube) , ***das Österreich** (Austria), ***das Wien** (Vienna)

*In general, the neuter article is only used with an adjective: **das gemütliche Wien** (the cosy Vienna)

Many masculine nouns (mostly referring to professions or titles) have a corresponding female version ending in **-in**:
der Bäcker - die Bäckerin (baker), **der Pilot - die Pilotin** (pilot), **der König - die Königin** (king - queen), **der Bauer - die Bäuerin** (farmer)

Diminutives ending in **-chen** or **-lein** are neuter:
der Hund - das Hündchen (dog), **die Katze - das Kätzchen** (cat), **das Kind - das Kindlein** (child)

Number: Singular and Plural

A word can be singular in number (one person or thing) or plural (more than one person or thing). German nouns, pronouns, articles, adjectives, and verbs may all change their form based on number. The plural article for all three genders is **die**. Some plural nouns have the same form as the singular, but most nouns have special endings (often with an umlaut added) to indicate the plural.

Strong declension:

Nouns ending in **-chen, -lein, -el, -en, or -er** form the plural by adding **-n** in the dative and some plural vowels form an umlaut in the plural in addition:

	singular	plural	
nom.	der Kessel	die Kessel	(kettle)
acc.	den Kessel	die Kessel	
dat.	dem Kessel	den Kesseln	
gen.	des Kessels	der Kessel	

Most nouns with one syllable add **-e (-en** in the dative) to form the plural and some plural vowels form an umlaut in the plural in addition:

	singular	plural	
nom.	der Kamm	die Kämme	(comb)
acc.	den Kamm	die Kämme	
dat.	dem Kamm	den Kämmen	
gen.	des Kammes	der Kämme	

Nouns adding **-er (-ern** in the dative) are declined as follows: (They are always masculine or neuter and some vowels form an umlaut in the plural in addition.)

	singular	plural	
nom.	das Bild	die Bilder	(picture)
acc.	das Bild	die Bilder	
dat.	dem Bild	den Bildern	
gen.	des Bildes	der Bilder	

Weak declension:

Nouns adding **-en** to the singular form of all four cases in the plural are declined as follows: (They never form an umlaut in the plural. They are mostly feminine, never neuter.)

	singular	plural	
nom.	die Schule	die Schulen	(school)
acc.	die Schule	die Schulen	
dat.	der Schule	den Schulen	
gen.	der Schule	der Schulen	

Nouns of foreign origin add an **-s** to the singular to form the plural like in English:

	singular	plural	
nom.	das Radio	die Radios	(radio)
acc.	das Radio	die Radios	
dat.	dem Radio	den Radios	

gen. des Radios der Radios

Besides those five groups there are also some nouns with mixed declensions, but they are the exception.

Case

German nouns have four cases: the nominative (subject of the sentence); the accusative (direct object); the dative (indirect object), and the genitive (possessive). The case indicates how a noun is used in a sentence. In the sentence **Die Mutter bäckt Walter einen Kuchen**, **die Mutter** (the mother) is the subject of the sentence and takes the nominative case; **bäckt** (bakes) is the verb of the sentence; **Walter** is the indirect object and takes the dative case; and **einen Kuchen** (a cake) is the direct object and takes the accusative case. The case determines the ending of a noun.

There are two groups for masculine nouns.

Masculine nouns (strong) ending in **-s** or **-es** in the genitive case:

nom.	der Bruder	the brother
acc.	den Bruder	the brother
dat.	dem Bruder	to the brother
gen.	des Bruders	of the brother

Masculine nouns (weak) ending in **-en** in the accusative, dative, and genitive case:

nom.	der Löwe	the lion
acc.	den Löwen	the lion
dat.	dem Löwen	to the lion
gen.	des Löwen	of the lion

Feminine nouns take no ending:

nom.	die Puppe	the doll
acc.	die Puppe	the doll
dat.	der Puppe	to the doll
gen.	der Puppe	of the doll

Neuter nouns take an ending of **-s** or **-es** only:

nom.	das Lied	the song
acc.	das Lied	the song
dat.	dem Lied	to the song
gen.	des Liedes	of the song

All nouns ending in sibilants such as **-s**, **-ß**, **-sch**, **-z**, **-zt** take the **-es** ending:

der Schuß - des Schußes (shot), **der Tisch - des Tisches** (table), **das Netz - des Netzes** (net)

The shorter ending **-s** is used if the noun ends in **-en**, **-em**, **-el**, or **-er**:

der Pfosten - des Pfostens (post), **der Atem - des Atems** (breath), **der Deckel - des Deckels** (lid), **das Leder - des Leders** (leather)

Definite and Indefinite Articles

Articles that refer to specific persons or objects are called definite articles: **der, die, das** (the). Articles that refer to unspecified persons or objects are called indefinite articles: **ein** (a, an). There is no plural form.

Definite article forms are:

singular:	masculine	feminine	neuter	
nom	der	die	das	(the)
acc.	den	die	das	(the)
dat.	dem	der	dem	(to the)
gen.	des	der	des	(of the)

plural:

	all genders	
nom.	die	(the)
acc.	die	(the)
dat.	den	(to the)
gen.	der	(of the)

Indefinite article forms are:

singular:	masculine>	feminine>	neuter>	
nom.	ein	eine	ein	(a, an)
acc.	einen	eine	ein	(a, an)
dat.	einem	einer	einem	(to a, an)
gen.	eines	einer	eines	(of a, an)

Pronouns

Pronouns are words which are used in place of a noun: **er** (Paul), **sie** (Martha and Monika). There are several families of pronouns: personal, possessive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, indefinite and reflexive. In the German language, pronoun use is governed by case, number and gender.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns replace the subject of a sentence (also called subject pronouns). They can be singular or plural. In the sentence **Ich gehe zur Schule** (I go to school), **ich** is the personal pronoun. Personal pronouns are:

singular	ich	I	
	du	you	(familiar)
	Sie	you	(formal)
	er, sie,	he, she,	
	es	it	

plural	wir	we	
	ihr	you	(familiar)
	Sie	you	(formal)
	sie	they	

Object Pronouns

Object pronouns are used to replace the objects in a sentence. Some replace the direct objects, others the indirect objects. The direct object answers the question who or what. In the sentence **Martha wirft dem Kind den Ball zu**. (Martha throws the ball to the child), **den Ball** can be replaced by the direct object pronoun **ihn**. Indirect objects answer the question to whom or to what. **Dem Kind** can be replaced by an indirect object pronoun: **ihm**.

Object pronouns in the accusative are:

singular	mich	me	
	dich	you	(familiar)
	Sie	you	(formal)
	ihn, sie, es		
plural	uns	us	
	euch	you	(familiar)
	Sie	you	(formal)
	sie	them	

Object pronouns in the dative are:

singular	mir	to me	
	dir	to you	(familiar)
	Ihnen	to you	(formal)
	ihm, ihr, ihm		
plural	uns	to us	
	euch	to you	(familiar)
	Ihnen	to you	(formal)
	ihnen	to them	

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns refer to the subject. Reflexive pronouns can serve as either direct or indirect objects and therefore can take either the accusative (direct) or the dative (indirect) case. In the sentence **Ich wasche mich** (I wash myself), **mich** is an accusative reflexive pronoun. **Ich muß es mir überlegen** (I have to think about it), **mir** is a dative reflexive pronoun.

Reflexive pronouns in the accusative are:

singular	mich	myself	
	dich	yourself	(familiar)
	sich	yourself	(formal)
	sich	himself, herself, itself	
plural	uns	ourselves	
	euch	yourselves	(familiar)
	sich	yourselves	(formal)
	sich	themselves	

Reflexive pronouns in the dative are:

singular	mir	myself	
	dir	yourself	(familiar)
	sich	yourself	(formal)
	sich	himself, herself, itself	
plural	uns	ourselves	
	euch	yourselves	(familiar)
	sich	yourselves	(formal)
	sich	themselves	

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns refer to nouns or pronouns in the preceding main clause (their antecedents). They are the first word in a subordinate clause modifying the antecedent; e.g. **Ich habe ein Haus gekauft, das an einem See liegt** (I bought a house that is situated by a lake). The relative pronouns in German are **der, die, das** (who, that, which), **wer, was** (who, that) and **welcher** (who, that). The gender, number, and case of the relative pronoun agrees with its antecedent.

Possessives

Possessives indicate ownership. They can be used as either adjectives or pronouns; e.g. **Das ist mein Bleistift.** (That is my pencil), **Das Buch ist mein.** (The book is mine).

Here is the example of the possessive for the masculine nominative:

singular	mein	my	
	dein	your	(familiar)
	Ihr	your	(formal)
	sein, ihr, sein	his, her, its	
plural	unser	our	
	euer	your	(familiar)
	Ihr	your	(formal)
	ihr	their	

The declension of the possessive adjective in the singular follows the pattern of the indefinite article **ein**. In the plural it follows the pattern of the demonstrative **diese**.

Demonstratives

Demonstratives refer to someone or something that has been referred to previously. **Diesen Mann möchte ich heiraten.** (This man I would like to marry). The other demonstratives are: **der, die, das, jener, solcher.** Demonstratives can be used as adjectives or pronouns; e.g. **Diese Vase ist blau.** (This vase is blue.) and **Jene ist rot.** (That one is red). Demonstratives agree in gender and number with the noun or pronoun they modify.

singular:	masculine	feminine	neuter
nom.	dieser	diese	dieses
acc.	diesen	diese	dieses
dat.	diesem	dieser	diesem
gen.	dieses	dieser	dieses
plural:	masculine	feminine	neuter
nom.	diese	diese	diese
acc.	diese	diese	diese
dat.	diesen	diesen	diesen
gen.	dieser	dieser	dieser

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns replace a noun. They introduce a question. The main German interrogative pronouns are: **wer** (who), **wen** (whom), **wem** (to whom), **wessen** (whose), **was** (what), **welcher** (which). **Wer hat den Kuckuck gehört?** (Who heard the cuckoo?)

There is only one form for all the genders; there is no plural, with the exception of **welcher**, that can be used as an adjective. It agrees with the corresponding noun in gender, number, and case.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to persons or objects that are not identified. Some can also be used as adjectives. **Einige Häuser sind größer als andere.** (Some houses are bigger than others). The most common indefinite pronouns are: **all-, ander-, einig-, etwas, jed-, kein-, nichts, man, niemand.** **Etwas, nichts** and **man** are never declined.

Verbs

Verbs describe an action, a process or a state of being. Verbs agree with the person (1st, 2nd or 3rd) and number (singular or plural) of their subject. There are two parts to all German verbs: the stem, and an ending. The stem and the ending **-en** form the infinitive, which is the form given in dictionaries. When conjugated, verbs indicate tense (e.g. present or past), mood (e.g. indicative or subjunctive), voice (active or passive), person, and number. There are weak verbs, strong verbs, and irregular verbs (mixed verbs). Weak verbs do not change the stem vowel in the past tense and the past participle. Strong verbs do change the stem vowel in the past tense and the past participle. Irregular verbs contain parts of both weak and strong verbs.

Prefixes

The German language contains many prefixes which, added to a verb, can change its meaning. There are two types of German prefixes: separable and inseparable.

Separable prefixes (**ab, bei, ein, vor, etc.**) can stand independently as words. When used with a verb in the present and past tense they can be moved to the end of the sentence: **Ich lege den Brief bei** (I enclose the letter). In tenses other than the present and past, prefix and verb are not separated: **Er wird zurückkommen** (He will come back). In the present perfect, past perfect, and in the future perfect **ge** is added between prefix and verb: **Sie haben dich eingeladen** (They invited you).

The **inseparable** prefixes are **be-, emp-, ent-, er-, ver-, zer-**. They cannot be removed from their verbs. The past participle does not take the prefix **ge-**. The most common inseparable prefix verbs are: **behalten** (to keep), **bekommen** (to get), **empfangen** (to receive), **empfehlen** (to recommend), **entdecken** (to discover), **erreichen** (to achieve), **verkaufen** (to sell), **vermieten** (to rent), **verstehen** (to understand), **versagen** (to fail), **zerstören** (to destroy).

Present Tense

The present tense is used to express what happens in the present time. The present tense of regular (weak) verbs is formed by removing the -en ending of the infinitive and adding a new ending to the resulting stem. Weak German verbs take the following endings to form the present tense: **ich -e, du -st, Sie -en, er (sie, es, man) -t, wir -en, ihr -t, Sie -en, sie -en.**

Weak verb in present tense:

singular	ich gehe		gehen	(to go)
	du geh st	(familiar)		
	Sie geh en	(formal)		
	er, sie, es			
	geh t			
plural	wir geh en			
	ihr geh t	(familiar)		
	Sie geh en	(formal)		
	sie geh en			

Strong verbs change in the singular second person familiar and third person forms. Those changes are regular and predictable: **a** becomes **ä**, **e** becomes **ie** or **i**, **au** becomes **äu**, **o** becomes **ö**. Note that the plural form is regular.

Strong verb in present tense:

singular	ich nehme	nehmen	(to take)
	du n imm st	(familiar)	
	Sie neh men	(formal)	
	er, sie, es		
	n imm t		
plural	wir neh men		
	ihr neh mt	(familiar)	
	Sie neh men	(formal)	
	sie neh men		

Mixed verbs are irregular and are best learnt by heart. The most common conjugation is the one for the weak verb. But there are some exceptions for all three types of verb conjugations.

Past Tense (Imperfect)

The simple past tense (imperfect) is used to describe past events. It is a literary tense, regularly used when writing about the past. It is formed using only one word, the verb. The ending for the regular (weak) verb is: **ich -te, du -test, Sie -ten, er (sie, es, man) -te, wir -ten, ihr -tet, Sie -ten, sie -ten.**

Weak verb in past tense:

singular	ich koch te		kochen (to cook)
	du koch test	(familiar)	
	Sie koch ten	(formal)	
	er, sie, es koch te		
plural	wir koch ten		
	ihr koch tet	(familiar)	
	Sie koch ten	(formal)	
	sie koch ten		

To form the past tense, strong verbs change their stem vowels and add the following endings:

ich **-no change in ending**, du **-st**, Sie **-en**, er (sie, es, man) **-no change in ending**, wir **-en**, ihr **-t**, Sie **-en**, sie **-en**.

Strong verb in past tense:

singular	ich kam		kommen (to come)
	du kam st	(familiar)	
	Sie kam en	(formal)	
	er, sie, es kam		
plural	wir kam en		
	ihr kam t	(familiar)	
	Sie kam en	(formal)	
	sie kam en		

Irregular verbs change the vowel in the stem and, in addition, take weak verb endings in the past tense.

Irregular verb in past tense:

singular	ich wu ßte		wissen (to know)
	du wu ßtest	(familiar)	
	Sie wu ßten	(formal)	
	er, sie, es wu ßte		
plural	wir wu ßten		
	ihr wu ßtet	(familiar)	
	Sie wu ßten	(formal)	
	sie wu ßten		

Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense is usually equivalent to the English past tense (e.g. "I went") rather than to the English perfect tense (e.g. "I have gone") which it resembles. It is the tense most often used when speaking about the past. The present perfect tense is a compound tense and is formed using the present tense of the auxiliary verb **haben** or **sein** and a past participle:

Er hat gelacht (he laughed). **Sie ist gekommen** (she came).

Past Perfect Tense (Pluperfect)

The past perfect tense is a compound tense and is formed using the past tense of the auxiliary verb **haben** or **sein** and a past participle: **Er hatte gelacht** (he had laughed). **Sie war gekommen** (she had come).

Future

There are two ways to express the future. The simplest and most common method is to use the present tense with an appropriate time marker; e.g. **Ich gehe morgen nach Köln.** (I'm going to Cologne tomorrow). The other method is to use the appropriate present tense form of **werden** with the infinitive of the main verb (which comes at the end of the sentence); e.g. **Ich werde nach Hamburg fahren.** (I will drive to Hamburg).

Past Participle

The past participle is the form of the verb used in the formation of compound tenses. Strong verbs form the past participle by adding the prefix **ge-** and weak verbs add the ending **-t** (or **-et** if the stem ends in **t, d** or **gn**). The majority of German verbs form the past participle in this way:

fahren-gefahren (to drive)
gehen-gegangen (to go)
lernen-gelernt (to learn)

There are strong verbs that change the stem vowel of the infinitive to form the past participle:

treffen-getroffen (to meet)
gewinnen-gewonnen (to swim)
singen-gesungen (to sing)

It's best to learn these participle forms by heart.

Past participles can be used as adjectives: **der gefallene Soldat** (the killed soldier), **das gebratene Hähnchen** (the fried chicken). They agree in gender and number with the noun or pronoun they modify.

Present Participle (Gerund)

The present participle corresponds to the English "-ing" form of the verb. It is most often used as an adjective or adverb: **der spielende Knabe** (the playing boy), **bedeutend größer** (considerably bigger). The present participle is formed by adding the ending **-d** to the infinitive:

gehen	to go	gehend	walking
stehen	to stand	stehend	standing
trinken	to drink	trinkend	drinking

It agrees in gender and number with the noun or pronoun it modifies.

Die steigende Inflation macht dem Kanzler Sorgen.
(Rising inflation is troubling the chancellor.)

Auxiliary Verbs (Helping Verbs)

There are three auxiliary verbs in German: **sein**, **haben**, and **werden**. Auxiliary, or helping, verbs are used in conjunction with other verbs to form the compound tenses, but they can also be used independently: **sein** = to be, **haben** = to have, and **werden** = to become. All three verbs are irregular.

Werden is used in conjunction with the future tenses and the passive voice. **Sein** and **haben** are used with all the other perfect tenses.

The present tense of **sein**, **haben**, and **werden** is:

singular	ich bin du bist Sie sind er, sie, es ist	(familiar) (formal)	sein (to be)
plural	wir sind ihr seid Sie sind sie sind	(familiar) (formal)	
singular	ich habe du hast Sie haben er, sie, es hat	(familiar) (formal)	haben (to have)
plural	wir haben ihr habt Sie haben sie haben	(familiar) (formal)	
singular	ich werde du wirst Sie werden er, sie, es wird	(familiar) (formal)	werden (to become)
plural	wir werden ihr werdet Sie werden sie werden	(familiar) (formal)	

Modal Verbs

Modal verbs express possibility, desirability, intention, permission, necessity or uncertainty in connection with an action. Normally, modal verbs are followed by an infinitive. There are six German modals: **können**, **wollen**, **sollen**, **dürfen**, **müssen**, and **mögen**.

Subjunctive

The subjunctive is used to express fear, doubt, hope etc., in short, anything that is not a fact. The imperfect subjunctive for weak verbs is identical to the past tense indicative. Strong and irregular verbs form the subjunctive by adding the following subjunctive endings to the stem of the past tense verb form: ich **-e**, du **-est**, Sie **-en**, er (sie, es, man) **-e**, wir **-en**, ihr **-et**, Sie **-en**, sie **-en**. Verbs containing the stem vowel **a**, **o**, or **u** add an umlaut in the subjunctive form.

singular	ich ginge	gehen (to go) - ging (went)
	du	(familiar)
	gingest	
	Sie	(formal)
	gingen	
	er, sie, es	
	ginge	
plural	wir	
	gingen	
	ihr ginget	(familiar)
	Sie	(formal)
	gingen	
	sie	
	gingen	

Würde + infinitive is a common and very simple way of expressing the subjunctive of weak and strong verbs. It is especially common for avoiding the subjunctive of weak verbs, because this form of weak verbs is identical to the simple past; using **würde** prevents possible misunderstanding.

Er fürchtete, er lernte die Vokabeln nicht would usually be reworded:

Er fürchtete, er würde die Vokabeln nicht lernen. (He was afraid he wouldn't learn the vocabulary).

As in English, the subjunctive is on the way out and when the subjunctive is necessary, the circumscription with **würde** is becoming more and more common. The imperfect subjunctive is the most often used subjunctive form.

Imperative

The imperative form is used for commands and requests. To form it, the verb is in first position and the sentence ends with an exclamation point. In formal commands, the imperative verb is identical to the infinitive: **Machen Sie die Tür zu!** (Close the door, please!) For familiar commands, the pronoun (**du** or **ihr**) is dropped. For the **du** form, the stem of the **du** form is used and the personal ending **-st** is dropped. **Mach die Tür zu!** For the **ihr** form, the indicative verb is used and the pronoun is dropped: **Macht die Tür zu!**

Indicative:	Imperative:
Sie machen die Tür zu.	Machen Sie die Tür zu!
Du machst die Tür zu.	Mach die Tür zu!
Ihr macht die Tür zu.	Macht die Tür zu!

A command can be softened by using **bitte** either preceding the verb or immediately following it.

Bitte, mach die Tür zu!

Mach bitte die Tür zu!

Active and Passive Voice

In the active voice, the grammatical subject is the doer of the action expressed by the verb; e.g. **Er kauft einen neuen Wagen.** (He buys a new car). In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon: **Ein neuer Wagen wird von ihm gekauft.** (A new car is purchased by him). Note that the original direct object (**einen neuen Wagen**) becomes the subject of the verb, while the former subject (**er**) becomes the prepositional object (**von ihm**), taking the dative. To form the passive voice, a conjugated form of the auxiliary verb **werden** and a past participle are used.

Adjectives

Adjectives describe or modify nouns. They agree in gender and number with the noun that they modify. Adjectives are affected by case and take different endings when placed before the noun. Adjectives which follow the noun do not change with case. **Der reife Apfel** (the ripe apple), **der Apfel ist reif** (the apple is ripe).

Adjectives preceded by the definite article **der, die, das** (the) or the pronouns **dieser** (this), **jener** (that), **solcher** (such), **jeder** (each), **welcher** (which), or **all** (all) have a weak declension:

singular	masculine	feminine/neuter
nom.	der liebe n Hund	das alte n Buch
acc.	den liebe n Hund	das alte n Buch
dat.	dem liebe n Hund	dem alte n Buch
gen.	des liebe n Hundes	des alte n Buches

The plural endings for weak adjectives are the same for all three genders in all four cases: -**en**.

Alle lieben Hunde (the good dogs), **diese schönen Rosen** (the beautiful roses), **jene alten Bücher** (the old books).

Adjectives preceded by the indefinite article **ein** (a, one) or the pronouns **mein** (my, mine), **sein** (his), **ihr** (her), **kein** (no, none) **unser** (our), or **euer** (your) have an irregular declension:

singular:	masculine	feminine	neuter
nom.	ein gute r Hund	eine schöne n Rose	ein alte s Buch
acc.	einen gute n Hund	eine schöne n Rose	ein alte s Buch
dat.	einem gute n Hund	einer schöne n Rose	einem alte n Buch
gen.	eines gute n Hundes	einer schöne n Rose	eines alte n Buches

The plural endings for irregular adjectives are the same for all three genders in all four cases: -**en**.

Meine lieben Hunde (my good dogs), **deine schönen Rosen** (your beautiful roses), **seine alten Bücher** (his old books).

Adjectives not preceded by any word and adjectives preceded by indefinite pronouns or numerals have a strong declension:

singular	masculine	feminine	neuter
nom.	gute r Hund	schöne n Rose	alte s Buch
acc.	gute n Hund	schöne n Rose	alte s Buch
dat.	gute m Hund	schöne r Rose	alte m Buch
gen.	gute n Hundes	schöne r Rose	alte n Buches

The plural endings for strong adjectives are the same for all three genders:

nom.	gute n Hunde
acc.	gute n Hunde

dat.
gen.

guten Hunden
guter Hunde

Adverbs

Adverbs do not have endings. They modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs, and specify place, time, manner, and causality: **Franz freut sich riesig**. (Franz is enormously happy). Most German adjectives can be used as adverbs, but many words are adverbs only, with no adjectival form: **Er steht draußen**. (He stands outside).

Adverbs of place are:

hier (here), **dort** (there), **nirgends** (nowhere), **draußen** (outside), **oben** (above) etc.

Adverbs of time are:

heute (today), **gestern** (yesterday), **sofort** (immediately), **nie** (never), **bald** (soon) etc.

Adverbs of manner and degree are:

kaum (hardly), **sehr** (very), **genug** (enough), **anders** (differently), **beinahe** (almost) etc.

Adverbs of causality are:

darum (therefore), **folglich** (consequently), **hierzu** (to this, hereto), **nötigenfalls** (if necessary), **sonst** (otherwise) etc.

Comparison

The German comparative ("more...") and superlative ("most...") forms are basically the same as in English. For the comparative, an **-er** ending (**-r** if it ends in an **-e**) is added to the stem of the adjective. For the superlative, **-st** (**-est** if it ends in **-d, -t, -s, -ß, or -z**) is added to the adjective stem.

heiß - heißer - heißest (hot - hotter - hottest)

In addition, many adjectives of one syllable take an umlaut for the comparative or superlative form:

kalt - kälter - kältest (cold - colder - coldest)

The superlative form can also be formed by using the preposition **am** before the adjective plus the ending **-sten**:

am schönsten (the most beautiful)

The two superlative forms are interchangeable and have the same meaning.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words which join two or more phrases or clauses together. Coordinating conjunctions link two phrases or sentences of equal value; the position of the verbs in the joined phrases stay the same.

The most important coordinating conjunctions are:

und (and), **oder** (or), **denn** (for), **aber** (but), ***sondern** (rather or but)
***sondern** is always preceded by a negative in the previous clause.

Subordinating conjunctions join a subordinate clause to the main clause; the verb of the subordinate clause moves to the end of the clause.

The most important subordinating conjunctions are:

als (but, than), **bevor** (before), **da** (as, when, since), **damit** (in order), **daß** (that), **falls** (in case), **indem** (as, while), **nachdem** (after), **ob** (if, whether), **seit** (since), **weil** (because, since), **wenn** (when, if)

Prepositions

Prepositions govern a noun or pronoun to form a prepositional phrase. In German, prepositions are very important because they determine the case of the noun or pronoun which follows.

Prepositions governing the accusative are:

durch (through, across) **für** (for), **gegen** (against), **ohne** (without), **um** (about, near), etc.

Prepositions governing the dative are:

aus (out of, by, from), **bei** (near on), **dank** (thanks to), **entgegen** (against), **gemäß** (according to), **mit** (with), **nach** (to, for) **seit** (since, for) **von** (from, of), **zu** (to) etc.

Prepositions governing the accusative or dative are:

an (at, on), **auf** (on, at), **hinter** (behind), **in** (in, at), **neben** (by, against), **über** (over), **unter** (under), **vor** (in front of, before), **zwischen** (between) etc.

When a preposition indicates direction, the accusative is used: **Er legt die Bücher auf den Tisch.**

(He lays the books on the table.)

When a preposition indicates location, the dative is used: **Die Bücher liegen auf dem Tisch.** (The books lie on the table.)

Numbers

Cardinal numbers, such as **eins** (one) and **zwei** (two), are used to express precise quantities.

Cardinal numbers from one to nine are called **Einer**. Numbers such as **zehn** (ten), **zwanzig** (twenty), **dreiig** (thirty) are called **Zehner**.

Cardinal numbers from 1 to 20 are:

0	null	zero
1	eins	one
2	zwei	two
3	drei	three
4	vier	four
5	fnf	five
6	sechs	six
7	sieben	seven
8	acht	eight
9	neun	nine
10	zehn	ten
11	elf	eleven
12	zwlf	twelve
13	dreizehn	thirteen
14	vierzehn	fourteen
15	fnfzehn	fifteen
16	sechzehn	sixteen
17	siebzehn	seventeen
18	achtzehn	eighteen
19	neunzehn	nineteen
20	zwanzig	twenty

Numbers from 21 to 99 are formed by an **Einer** and a **Zehner** joined by **und**: **einundzwanzig** (twenty-one), **zweiunddreiig** (twenty-two).

From 100 on, **und** is not used between numbers:

hundertachtzehn (one hundred and eighteen),
viertausendsiebenhundertvierundvierzig (four thousand seven hundred and forty-four)

Ordinal numbers, such as **erste** (first) and **zweite** (second), refer to a position in a series. They are formed by adding **-te** to the corresponding cardinal numbers. Ordinals can be declined like adjectives. When written as a number, ordinal numbers are always followed by a period, e.g. **1.**, **2.**, **3.**

Notice the three irregular forms, **erste**, **dritte**, and **siebte**.

1.	erste	first
2.	zweite	second
3.	dritte	third
4.	vierte	fourth
5.	fnfte	fifth
6.	sechste	sixth
7.	siebte	seventh
8.	achte	eighth

- | | | |
|-----|--------|-------|
| 9. | neunte | ninth |
| 10. | zehnte | tenth |

Negative Construction

To form a negative statement in German, the word **nicht** is added. **Nicht** usually follows the verb, but there are exceptions to this rule. Other negatives include **kein**, **niemand**, and **nie**; their use is not as strictly regulated as that of **nicht**.

Das Haus gehört ihm (the house belongs to him). **Das Haus gehört ihm nicht** (the house doesn't belong to him).

Interrogatives

In interrogative sentences, the verb comes first and is followed by the subject; e.g. **Was hast du?** (What's the matter with you?).

Sentences

Sentences are made up of one or more clauses. A clause consists of a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (what is said about the noun or pronoun). The predicate always contains a verb. In this simple sentence: **Der König herrscht** (The king rules); **König** is the subject and **herrscht** is the predicate.

Adjectives or nouns used along with the verb in order to describe what is being asserted about someone or something, are in the predicative position. In the sentence **Der König ist der Herrscher** (The king is the sovereign); **Herrscher** is a predicate noun. In the sentence **Der König ist wohlwollend** (The king is benevolent), **wohlwollend** is a predicate adjective. Predicate adjectives and nouns have the same case as the nouns or pronouns they refer to.

Nouns or pronouns which are related to the action of the verb or to a preposition are called objects. In German there are direct objects (accusative), indirect objects (dative), possessives (genitive) and objects of prepositions. The direct object of a verb is a noun or pronoun which receives the action of a verb directly. In the sentence **Der König liebt die Königin** (The king loves the queen), **Königin** is the direct object of the verb. In German, indirect objects are nouns or pronouns for whom, to whom, or in whose interest something is done, given, or said. They are always in the dative case. In the sentence **Der König gibt der Königin eine Perle** (The king gives a pearl to the queen.), **eine Perle** is direct object, **der Königin** is indirect object.

The genitive case is used to show ownership. In the sentence **Das Schloß des Königs liegt am See** (The king's castle is located on the lake), ownership is indicated with the genitive case, **des Königs**. Possession of articles of clothing and parts of the body are indicated with a dative pronoun: **Ich wasche mir die Hände** (I'm washing my hands), **Monika putzt sich die Zähne** (Monica is brushing her teeth). With proper nouns, an **-s** is commonly added without an apostrophe to indicate possession: **Bertas Bruder kommt morgen** (Berta's brother is coming tomorrow), **Die Geschichte Deutschlands ist höchst interessant** (Germany's history is most interesting).

Some German prepositions take the accusative case; they are **bis, durch, für, gegen, ohne, zu**. **Die Königin ging durch den Wald** (The queen walked through the woods). Other prepositions always take the dative case. They are **aus, außer, bei, gegenüber, mit, nach, seit, von, zu**. **Ursula ging mit dem Hund spazieren**. (Ursula went on a walk with her dog.) However, many can take either the accusative or the dative case, depending on how they are used in the sentence. When a preposition indicates direction, the accusative is used: **Er legt die Bücher auf den Tisch** (He lays the books on the table.) When a preposition indicates location, the dative is used: **Die Bücher liegen auf dem Tisch** (The books lie on the table.)

Grammar Pages

Number

Person

Gender

Elision

Verbs: Strong Conjugation

Verbs: Weak Conjugation

Number

There are two numbers in German: **singular** and **plural**.
Most nouns in German have singular and plural forms:

die Familie, die Familien (the family, the families)

See [Number: Singular and Plural](#)

Pronouns also have singular and plural forms:

du, ihr (mine [singular, masculine, feminine])
mein, meine (mine [plural, masculine, feminine])

See [Pronouns](#)

Adjectives and articles agree with nouns in number (and also in gender).

der alte Hund (the old dog)
das große Mädchen (the tall girl)

See

[Adjectives](#)

[Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)

Verbs and different verbal forms (present and past participles) agree with the subject of the sentence in number:

Wir tragen braune Schuhe.
(We are wearing brown shoes.)

Tragen is 1st person plural, present tense of the verb **tragen** agrees in number (and in gender) with the personal pronoun **wir**.

See

[Verbs](#)

[Active and Passive Voice](#)

[Past Participle](#)

[Present Participle \(Gerund\)](#)

Person

Grammatical person indicates the relationship of speaker or writer to the rest of the sentence. First person refers to the speaker or to the speaker group (**Ich, mir, mein, mich, wir, unser, uns**). Second person refers to whomever is being spoken to (**du, dir, dein, dich, ihr, euer, euch**). Third person refers to the entity being spoken about (**er, sich, sie, sich, sie, sich**).

See

[Personal Pronouns](#)

[Object Pronouns](#)

[Reflexive Pronouns](#)

[Possessives](#)

Verbs are inflected (receive different endings) to agree with the person of the subject:

sprechen (to talk)	Singular	Plural
1st person	ich spreche	wir sprechen
2nd person	du sprichst	ihr sprecht
3rd person	er/sie/es spricht	sie sprechen

See

[Verbs](#)

[Verbs: Strong Conjugation](#)

[Verbs: Weak Conjugation](#)

Gender

There are three genders in German: **masculine**, **feminine** and **neuter**.

All nouns in German are either masculine, feminine or neuter.

Although there are no rules by which the gender of all nouns can be determined, the gender of many nouns can be determined by their meaning or their ending. The gender of other nouns must be learned individually. The best way to memorize the gender of words is to memorize the article when learning a new word.

der Mann	(the man [masculine])
die Hand	(the hand [feminine])
das Mädchen	(the girl [neuter])

See

[Nouns](#)

Knowing the gender of every noun is important not only for the noun itself, but for the spelling and pronunciation of the words it influences in a sentence: adjectives, articles, participles, and pronouns. They agree in the gender and in the number with the noun.

See

[Adjectives](#)

[Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)

[Past Participle](#)

[Present Participle \(Gerund\)](#)

[Pronouns](#)

Elision

In most cases elision is optional in German. It occurs when the final vowel of a word is dropped before another word beginning with a vowel. The fact that the vowel has been elided is indicated by an apostrophe.

Hab' ich dir erzählt, daß die Großmutter zu Besuch kommt?

(Have I told you that grandmother will be visiting?.)

Verbs: Strong Conjugation

Present Infinitive
tragen (to carry or to wear)

Present Participle
tragend
Past Participle
getragen

with haben

Singular	Present	Past
1. Person	ich trage	ich trug
2. Person Familiar	du trägst	du trugst
2. Person Polite	Sie tragen	Sie trugen
3. Person	er trägt	er trug
3. Person	sie trägt	sie trug
3. Person	es trägt	es trug
Plural		
1. Person	wir tragen	wir trugen
2. Person Familiar	ihr tragt	ihr trugt
2. Person Polite	Sie tragen	Sie trugen
3. Person	sie tragen	sie trugen

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1. Person	ich habe getragen	ich hatte getragen
2. Person Familiar	du hast getragen	du hattest getragen
2. Person Polite	Sie haben getragen	Sie hatten getragen
3. Person	er hat getragen	er hatte getragen
3. Person	sie hat getragen	sie hatte getragen
3. Person	es hat getragen	es hatte getragen
Plural		
1. Person	wir haben getragen	wir hatten getragen
2. Person Familiar	ihr habt getragen	ihr hattet getragen
2. Person Polite	Sie haben getragen	Sie hatten getragen
3. Person	sie haben getragen	sie hatte getragen

Singular	Futur I	Futur II
1. Person	ich werde tragen	ich werde getragen haben
2. Person Familiar	du wirst tragen	du wirst getragen haben
2. Person Polite	Sie werden tragen	Sie werden getragen haben
3. Person	er wird tragen	er wird getragen haben
3. Person	sie wird tragen	sie wird getragen haben
3. Person	es wird tragen	es wird getragen haben

Plural

1. Person	wir werden tragen	wir werden getragen haben
2. Person Familiar	ihr werdet tragen	ihr werdet getragen haben
2. Person Polite	Sie werden tragen	Sie werden getragen haben
3. Person	sie werden tragen	sie werden getragen haben

Singular

	Subjunctive I	Subjunctive II
1. Person	trage	trüge
2. Person Familiar	tragest	trügest
2. Person Polite	tragen	trügen
3. Person	trage	trüge
3. Person	trage	trüge
3. Person	trage	trüge

Plural

1. Person	tragen	trügen
2. Person Familiar	traget	trüget
2. Person Polite	tragen	trügen
3. Person	tragen	trügen

	Imperative
du	trage!
ihr	tragt!
Sie	tragen!

Present Infinitive
laufen/ to walk

Present Participle
laufend
Past Participle
igelaufen

with sein

Singular	Present	Past
1. Person	ich laufe	ich lief
2. Person Familiar	du läufst	du liefst
2. Person Polite	Sie laufen	Sie liefen
3. Person	er läuft	er lief
3. Person	sie läuft	sie lief
3. Person	es läuft	es lief
Plural		
1. Person	wir laufen	wir liefen
2. Person Familiar	ihr lauft	ihr lieft

2. Person Polite	Sie laufen	Sie liefen
3. Person	sie laufen	sie liefen

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1. Person	ich bin gelaufen	ich war gelaufen
2. Person Familiar	du bist gelaufen	du warst gelaufen
2. Person Polite	Sie sind gelaufen	Sie waren gelaufen
3. Person	er ist gelaufen	er war gelaufen
3. Person	sie ist gelaufen	sie war gelaufen
3. Person	es ist gelaufen	es war gelaufen
Plural		
1. Person	wir sind gelaufen	wir waren gelaufen
2. Person Familiar	ihr seid gelaufen	ihr wart gelaufen
2. Person Polite	Sie sind gelaufen	Sie waren gelaufen
3. Person	sie sind gelaufen	sie waren gelaufen

Singular	Futur I	Futur II
1. Person	ich werde laufen	ich werde gelaufen sein
2. Person Familiar	du wirst laufen	du wirst gelaufen sein
2. Person Polite	Sie werden laufen	Sie werden gelaufen sein
3. Person	er wird laufen	er wird gelaufen sein
3. Person	sie wird laufen	sie wird gelaufen sein
3. Person	es wird laufen	es wird gelaufen sein
Plural		
1. Person	wir werden laufen	wir werden gelaufen sein
2. Person Familiar	ihr werdet laufen	ihr werdet gelaufen sein
2. Person Polite	Sie werden laufen	Sie werden gelaufen sein
3. Person	sie werden laufen	sie werden gelaufen sein

Singular	Subjunctive I	Subjunctive II
1. Person	laufe	liefе
2. Person Familiar	laufest	liefest
2. Person Polite	laufen	liefen
3. Person	laufe	liefе
3. Person	laufe	liefе
3. Person	laufe	liefе
Plural		
1. Person	laufen	liefen
2. Person Familiar	laufet	liefet
2. Person Polite	laufen	liefen
3. Person	laufen	liefen

	Imperative
du	laufe!
ihr	lauft!
Sie	laufen!

Verbs: Weak Conjugation

Present Infinitive
lernen (to learn)

Present Participle
lernend
Past Participle
gelernt

with haben

Singular	Present	Past Tense
1. Person	ich lerne	ich lernte
2. Person Familiar	du lernst	du lernstest
2. Person Polite	Sie lernen	Sie lernten
3. Person	er lernt	er lernte
3. Person	sie lernt	sie lernte
3. Person	es lernt	es lernte
Plural		
1. Person	wir lernen	wir lernten
2. Person Familiar	ihr lernt	ihr lerntet
2. Person Polite	Sie lernen	Sie lernten
3. Person	sie lernen	sie lernten

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1. Person	ich habe gelernt	ich hatte gelernt
2. Person Familiar	du hast gelernt	du hattest gelernt
2. Person Polite	Sie haben gelernt	Sie hatten gelernt
3. Person	er hat gelernt	er hatte gelernt
3. Person	sie hat gelernt	sie hatte gelernt
3. Person	es hat gelernt	es hatte gelernt
Plural		
1. Person	wir haben gelernt	wir hatten gelernt
2. Person Familiar	ihr habt gelernt	ihr hattet gelernt
2. Person Polite	Sie haben gelernt	Sie hatten gelernt
3. Person	sie haben gelernt	sie hatten gelernt

Singular	Futur I	Futur II
1. Person	ich werde lernen	ich werde gelernt haben
2. Person Familiar	du wirst lernen	du wirst gelernt haben
2. Person Polite	Sie werden lernen	Sie werden gelernt haben
3. Person	er wirst lernen	er wird gelernt haben
3. Person	sie werden lernen	sie wird gelernt haben
3. Person	es wird lernen	es wird gelernt haben

Plural

1. Person	wir werden lernen	wir werden gelernt haben
2. Person Familiar	ihr werdet lernen	ihr werdet gelernt haben
2. Person Polite	Sie werden lernen	Sie werden gelernt haben
3. Person	sie werden lernen	sie werden gelernt haben

Singular

	Subjunctive I	Subjunctive II
1. Person	lerne	lernte
2. Person Familiar	lernest	lernstest
2. Person Polite	lernen	lernten
3. Person	lerne	lernte
3. Person	lerne	lernte
3. Person	lerne	lernte

Plural

1. Person	lernen	lernten
2. Person Familiar	lernet	lerntet
2. Person Polite	lernen	lernten
3. Person	lernen	lernten

	Imperative
du	lerne!
ihr	lernt!
Sie	lernen!

Present Infinitive
folgen (to follow)

Present Participle
folgend
Past Participle
gefolgt

with sein

Singular	Present	Past
1. Person	ich folge	ich folgte
2. Person Familiar	du folgst	du folgstest
2. Person Polite	Sie folgen	Sie folgten
3. Person	er folgt	er folgte
3. Person	sie folgt	sie folgte
3. Person	es folgt	es folgte
Plural		
1. Person	wir folgen	wir folgten
2. Person Familiar	ihr folgt	ihr folgtet
2. Person Polite	Sie folgen	Sie folgten

3. Person sie folgen sie folgten

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1. Person	ich bin gefolgt	ich war gefolgt
2. Person Familiar	du bist gefolgt	du warst gefolgt
2. Person Polite	Sie sind gefolgt	Sie waren gefolgt
3. Person	er ist gefolgt	er war gefolgt
3. Person	sie ist gefolgt	sie war gefolgt
3. Person	es ist gefolgt	es war gefolgt
Plural		
1. Person	wir sind gefolgt	wir waren gefolgt
2. Person Familiar	ihr seid gefolgt	ihr wart gefolgt
2. Person Polite	Sie sind gefolgt	Sie waren gefolgt
3. Person	sie sind gefolgt	sie waren gefolgt

Singular	Futur I	Futur II
1. Person	ich werde folgen	ich werde gefolgt sein
2. Person Familiar	du wirst folgen	du wirst gefolgt sein
2. Person Polite	Sie werden folgen	Sie werden gefolgt sein
3. Person	er wird folgen	er wird gefolgt sein
3. Person	sie wird folgen	sie wird gefolgt sein
3. Person	es wird folgen	es wird gefolgt sein
Plural		
1. Person	wir werden folgen	wir werden gefolgt sein
2. Person Familiar	ihr werdet folgen	ihr werdet gefolgt sein
2. Person Polite	Sie werden folgen	Sie werden gefolgt sein
3. Person	sie werden folgen	sie werden gefolgt sein

Singular	Subjunctive I	Subjunctive II
1. Person	folge	folgte
2. Person Familiar	folgest	folgtest
2. Person Polite	folgen	folgten
3. Person	folge	folgte
3. Person	folge	folgte
3. Person	folge	folgte
Plural		
1. Person	folgen	folgten
2. Person Familiar	folget	folgten
2. Person Polite	folgen	folgten
3. Person	folgen	folgten

Imperative

du	folge!
ihr	folgt!
Sie	folgen!

